

Lalo language

Lalo (Chinese: 腊罗; Western Yi) is a Loloish language cluster spoken in western Yunnan, China by 300,000 speakers. Speakers are officially part of the Yi nationality, and Chinese linguists refer to it as "Western Yi" due to its distribution in western Yunnan. Lalo speakers are mostly located in southern Dali Prefecture, especially Weishan County, considered the traditional homeland of the Lalo.^[3] Historically, this area is the home of the Meng clan, who ruled the Nanzhao Kingdom (737–902 CE).^[4] Many speakers of Core Lalo dialects claim to be descendants of the Meng clan.^[4]

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Names

Many Lalo are referred to by the exonym *Menghua* (蒙化), a name used during the Yuan Dynasty to refer to an area comprising modern-day Weishan County and Nanjian County (Yang 2010:12). They are also referred to as *Tujia* (土家) people (Yunnan 1956:14-15).^[5]

David Bradley (2007)^[6] refers to the Lalo language cluster, which includes the Samatu language of Zhenkang County and Yongde County, as *Laloid*.

Demographics

Cathryn Yang (2010) gives the following demographic information for various Lalo languages. Combined, speakers of Lalo languages number fewer than 300,000 people.

- Central Lalo: 213,000 speakers across west-central Yunnan in Weishan County, Nanjian County, Jingdong County, and several others
- West Lalo: 44,000 speakers Yongping County, Yangbi County, and Longyang County
- East Lalo: 15,000 speakers in Dali County

Lalo	
Western Yi	
Native to	China
Ethnicity	Yi
Native speakers	320,000 (2002–2010) ^[1]
Language family	Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman) - Lolo–Burmese - Loloish - Lisoish - Lalo–Lavu Lalo
Dialects	Eka Mangdi Yangliu Xuzhang Core Lalo
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Variously: ywt – Xishanba (Central) yik – Dongshanba (Eastern, Western, East Mountain Central) yit – Eastern ywl – Western
Glottolog	lal01240 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/lal01240) ^[2]

- Yangliu: 7,000 speakers in Yangliu, Longyang District, Baoshan Prefecture
- Eka: 3,000 speakers in Yijiacun, Heliu, Shuangjiang County, Lincang Prefecture^[7]
- Mangdi: 3,000 speakers in Mangdi, Hepai, Gengma County, Lincang Prefecture;^{[8][9]} also in Cangyuan County
- Xuzhang: 2,000 speakers in Xuzhang, Wafang, Longyang District, Baoshan Prefecture^{[10][11]}

Wang & Zhao (2013), citing Chen, et al. (1985),^[12] divide Western Yi (彝语西部方言) into two dialects, namely Dongshan and Xishan.^[13] In Lincang Prefecture, Western Yi speakers number approximately 30,000 people and have the autonyms *la ʃlo t pa ʃ* and *mi ʃsa ʃ pa ʃ*.

- **Dongshan 东山**: spoken in Weishan (eastern part), Dali, Midu (in Dajiaban 大甲板 and Xiaojiaban 小甲板), Yongping, Baoshan counties
- **Xishan 西山**: spoken in Weishan (western part), Dali, Yun, Changning, Lincang, Shuangjiang, Midu, Jingdong, Jinggu counties

In Jianxing Township 建兴乡, Xinping County, Yunnan, **Lalu 腊鲁** is spoken in the two administrative villages of Malutang 马鹿塘 and Mowei 磨味 by about 3,000 people (Wang 2011:11,20).^[14]

- **Malutang 马鹿塘**^[15] (1,552 Lalo people): in the 11 villages of Goutoupo 狗头坡, Gaoyingzhai 高阴寨, Cizhujing 刺竹警, Upper Mazongshan 上马宗山, Lower Mazongshan 下马宗山, Daliqi 大力气, Yuwuxiang 玉武乡, Upper Mowei 上磨味, Lower Mowei 下磨味, Upper Yunpan 上云盘, Lower Yunpan 下云盘
- **Mowei 磨味**^[16] (1,460 Lalo people): in the 6 villages of Malu Dazu 马鹿大组, Lalo Xiaozhai 腊鲁小寨, Laojing 老警, Xinzhai 新寨, Tianfang 田房, and Meizijing 梅子警.

Lalo 腊鲁 (exonyms: Xiangtang 香堂 and Luoluo 罗罗) is also spoken in Sipsongpanna, including in Xiangmeng 象明乡, Yiwu 易武乡, Mengpeng 勐捧镇, and Jinghong 景洪市 townships.^[17]

Yunnan (1979)^[18] mentions the **Datou 达头** of Pu'er and Simao (population: 254 as of 1960) as having traditions and festivals similar to those of the Yi people of Weishan County, who are mostly Lalo speakers.

The **Aciga 阿次嘎** of Lancang County reside in Yakou Township 雅口乡^[19] and Nanxian Township 南现乡^[20] (now Nuozhadu Town 糯扎渡镇). They numbered 50 as of 1960.^[18] 100 years ago, they had migrated from Niujian Mountain 牛肩山, Zhenyue County 镇越县 (now renamed as Mengla County), and had spoken a different language that is now extinct. They now speak Chinese and "Yi" (presumably Lalo, as the Yi dialects of Lancang are mostly Lalo). Aciga is an exonym, as the Aciga do not have an autonym.

Subdivisions

Lama (2012) splits *Laluba* into three dialects.

Laluba

- *Misaba*
- (branch)
 - *Laloba*
 - *Laluba* (*la ʃlu t pa ʃ*)

A recent dialectological survey by Cathryn Yang (2010)^[4] shows that the Lalo cluster comprises at least 7 closely related languages. Three of these (Eastern, Western, and Central) constitute the Core Lalo group and are located in the traditional Lalo homeland of southern Dali Prefecture. There are also four peripheral languages, Mangdi, Eka, Yangliu, and Xuzhang, whose ancestors migrated out of the Lalo homeland at different times.

All Lalo languages show a reflex of the Proto-Lalo autonym *la²lɔ^Hpə^L; i.e. the name that the Proto-Lalo called themselves are still preserved in the various modern Lalo languages. Eka speakers' autonym is now *o Jk^ha ɬ*, but elderly speakers report that their more archaic autonym is *la ɬlɯɬ pɔɬ* (Yang 2010).

Yang's (2010:209) phylogenetic tree of Lalo is as follows.

- **Proto-Lalo**

- Eka
- Mangdi 芒底
- Yangliu 杨柳
- Greater Lalo
 - Xuzhang 徐掌
 - Core Lalo
 - Eastern
 - Taoshu 桃树
 - Core Eastern
 - Central-Western
 - Central
 - East Mountain
 - Core Central
 - Western
 - Yilu 义路
 - Core Western

Alu may also be a peripheral Lalo language, but this is uncertain due to limited data.^[21]

See also

- List of Proto-Lalo reconstructions (Wiktionary)

Further reading

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